

IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and listings.

Claims 1. - 11. (canceled).

Claim 12. (new): A network device management apparatus which has network connection means and manages a network device which is connected to a network, said device having a plurality of functions, comprising:

storage means for storing a network address of at least one network device that does not support any network-compatible Plug and Play function, and function information associated with a plurality of functions of the network device; and

response means for, when a location confirmation request of a network-compatible Plug and Play device is received via the network connection means, generating and returning a message including identification information which specifies the network device that does not support the network-compatible Plug and Play function as a plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices corresponding to the functions indicated by the plurality of pieces of function information stored in said storage means,

wherein the identification information identifying the plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices is used for installing a plurality of device drivers corresponding to the plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices.

Claim 13. (new): The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the function information stored in said storage means includes protocol information required to communicate with a network device to be stored.

Claim 14. (new): The apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising control means for, when job information addressed to the virtual network-compatible Plug and Play device is received via the network connection means, acquiring an address and protocol information of the corresponding network device from said storage means, converting the job information into the acquired protocol, and transmitting the converted information to the acquired address.

Claim 15. (new): The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the functions indicated by the function information include functions of a plurality of different printer drivers that can generate print data which can be processed by the network device.

Claim 16. (new): The apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising:

search means for searching for a network device which does not support any network-compatible Plug and Play function;

registration means for registering in said storage means a network address of a network device found by said search means, and information for specifying a protocol used in a communication with the network device found by said search means; and

generation means for generating a message to be returned by said response means in

place of the registered network device.

Claim 17. (new): The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said search means determines, as a network device group that does not support any network-compatible Plug and Play function, a network device group which remains after excluding network devices detected as a search result of a UPnP network protocol from a network device group detected by a search of an SNMP protocol.

Claim 18. (new): The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the network device is a network printer.

Claim 19. (new): The apparatus according to claim 18, wherein, when the network device supports a plurality of printer languages, said response means responds as a logically virtual network-compatible Plug and Play printer which is independent for each individual printer language.

Claim 20. (new): A method of controlling a network device management apparatus which has network connection means, and storage means for storing a network address of at least one network device that does not support any network-compatible Plug and Play function, and protocol information used to communicate with the network device, and manages a network device connected to a network, said method comprising the step of:
generating and returning, when a location confirmation request of a network-compatible Plug and Play device is received via the network connection means, a message

including identification information which specifies the network device that does not support the network-compatible Plug and Play function as a plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices corresponding to the functions indicated by a plurality of pieces of function information stored in the storage means,

wherein the identification information identifying the plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices is used for installing a plurality of device drivers corresponding to the plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices.

Claim 21. (new): A computer program, stored in a computer-readable storage medium, serving as a network device management apparatus which has network connection means, and storage means for storing a network address of at least one network device that does not support any network-compatible Plug and Play function, and protocol information used to communicate with the network device, and manages a network device connected to a network, said program comprising code for performing the step of:

generating and returning, when a location confirmation request of a network-compatible Plug and Play device is received via the network connection means, a message including identification information which specifies the network device that does not support the network-compatible Plug and Play function as a plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices corresponding to the functions indicated by a plurality of pieces of function information stored in the storage means,

wherein the identification information identifying the plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices is used for installing a plurality of device

drivers corresponding to the plurality of independent virtual network-compatible Plug and Play devices.

Claim 22. (new): A computer-readable storage medium storing the computer program of claim 21.

Claim 23. (new): The method according to claim 20, wherein the function information stored in the storage means includes protocol information required to communicate with a network device to be stored.

Claim 24. (new): The method according to claim 23, further comprising a control step of, when job information addressed to the virtual network-compatible Plug and Play device is received via the network connection means, acquiring an address and protocol information of the corresponding network device from said storage means, converting the job information into the acquired protocol, and transmitting the converted information to the acquired address.

Claim 25. (new): The method according to claim 20, wherein the functions indicated by the function information include functions of a plurality of different printer drivers that can generate print data which can be processed by the network device.

Claim 26. (new): The method according to claim 20, further comprising:
a search step of searching for a network device which does not support any

network-compatible Plug and Play function;

a registration step of registering in the storage means a network address of a network device found in said search step, and information for specifying a protocol used in a communication with the network device found in said search step; and

a generation step of generating a message to be returned in said step of generating and returning in place of the registered network device.

Claim 27. (new): The method according to claim 26, wherein said search step includes determining, as a network device group that does not support any network-compatible Plug and Play function, a network device group which remains after excluding network devices detected as a search result of a UPnP network protocol from a network device group detected by a search of an SNMP protocol.

Claim 28. (new): The method according to claim 20, wherein the network device is a network printer.

Claim 29. (new): The method according to claim 28, wherein, when the network device supports a plurality of printer languages, said step of generating and returning includes responding as a logically virtual network-compatible Plug and Play printer which is independent for each individual printer language.

Claim 30. (new): A network device management apparatus which manages a network device connected to a network, the device having a plurality of

functions, said apparatus comprising:

processing means for receiving and processing a request regarding the network device; and

response means for, when a request regarding the network device is received by said processing means, returning a plurality of identification data, each of the identification data corresponding to a respective one of the plurality of functions of the network device,

wherein the plurality of identification data to be returned by said response means is used for installing a plurality of device drivers corresponding to the plurality of functions of the network device.

Claim 31. (new): The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein the network device supports a plurality of printing languages, each of the plurality of identification data corresponding to a respective one of the plurality of printing languages.

Claim 32. (new): A method for controlling a network device management apparatus which manages a network device connected to a network, the device having a plurality of functions, said method comprising:

a response step of , when a request with regarding to the network device is received, returning a plurality of identification data, each of the identification data corresponding to a respective one of the plurality of functions of the network device,

wherein the plurality of identification data to be returned in said response step is used for installing a plurality of device drivers corresponding to the plurality of functions of the network device.

Claim 33. (new): The method according to claim 32, wherein the network device supports a plurality of printing languages, each of the plurality of identification data corresponding to a respective one of the plurality of printing languages.

Claim 34. (new): A computer-readable storage medium storing a computer program for causing a computer to perform the steps of the method of claim 32.